

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GENEVA 01806 101759Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 1806

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PORG, EAID, UN, (VIET-NAM)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION VISIT TO VIET-NAM

REF: 76 GENEVA 5935

1. VICTOR UMBRICHT, A SWISS INDUSTRIALIST WHO HAS BEEN SERVING AS SECRETARY-GENERAL WALDHEIM'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR COORDINATING AID TO VIET-NAM FOR PAST YEAR AND A HALF, PAID CALL ON DCM SORENSON MARCH 10, AT HIS OWN REQUEST.

2. UMBRICHT EXPLAINED THAT MAIN PURPOSE OF CALL WAS TO OFFER TO SHARE HIS EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHTS, GAINED IN CORSE OF HIS THREE VISITS TO VIET-NAM WITHIN PAST YEAR, WITH PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION WHENEVER COMMISSION MAY FIND A MEETING WITH HIM CONVENIENT. HE SAID HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO GO ANYWHERE IN EUROPE TO MEET THE COMMISSION IF IT TRANSITS EUROPE EITHER ENROUTE TO VIET-NAM OR ON RETURN LEG, OR HE WOULD GO TO BANGKOK TO MEET WITH COMMISSION ON THE FRINGES OF ITS VIEIT. IN THIS CONNECTION HE NOTED THAT HE IS POSTPONING A TRIP TO VIET-NAM PLANNED FOR NEXT WEEK BECAUSE OF COMMISSION'S ANNOUNCED VISIT, BUT
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THAT HE WOULD BE GOING THERE LATER THIS MONTH VIA BANGKOK.

3. FOLLOWING ARE INDICATIVE OF THE TYPES OF INFORMATION UMBRICHT COULD PROVIDE:

(A) DETAILS OF HIS OWN DISCUSSIONS WITH GRV ON THE

MIA PROBLEM. (HE HAS CONCLUDED THAT THEY PROBABLY HAVE INFORMATION ON NOR MORE THAN 50 MIAS AND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN UNWILLING TO MAKE THIS DATA AVAILABLE PARTLY BECAUSE SOME MIAS HAD BEEN KILLED AFTER CAPTURE.)

(B) VIEWS REGARDING RELATIVE LACK OF DISCIPLINE OF POPULATION IN SOUTH VIET-NAM AND ITS BEARING ON SECURITY OF COMMISSION IF IT SHOULD PLAN TO TRAVEL IN THE SOUTH.

(C) EXPERIENCES IN DEALING WITH GRB OFFICIALS AND TRAVELING AROUND THE COUNTRY.

(D) DATA AND INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT REGARDING VIETNAMESE RECONSTRUCTION NEEDS, AND TYPE AND VOLUME OF AID BEING PLANNED OR SUPPLIED.

4. UMBRICHT IMPRESSED US AS A SEASONED NEGOTIATOR AND OBSERVER WHO WOULD HAVE USEFUL SUGGESTIONS TO OFFER. ONE SUGGESTION HE PASSED ALONG WAS THAT IF GRV WILL WISH (WHICH HE THOUGHT PROBABLE) TO HAVE COMMISSION LOOK AT US BOMB DAMAGE IN THE NORTH, COMMISSION MAY WELL ASK GRB TO SHOW UNDAMAGED RED RIVER DIKES AS REMINDER OF US RESTRAINT.

5. UMBRICHT STRESSED THAT HIS INITIATIVE MOTIVATED ENTIRELY BY DESIRE TO BE HELPFUL AND SAID HE WOULD UNDERSTAND FULLY IF COMMISSION FELT THAT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO HAVE CONTACT WITH HIM AT THIS TIME.
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DCM EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR OFFER TO HELP AND SAID MISSION WOULD PASS IT ALONG TO WASHINGTON.

6. UMBRICHT MADE ADDITIONAL POINT THAT IN ABSENCE OF FORMAL GA OR ECOSOC MANDATE REGARDING THE UN'S ROLE IN CHANNELING AID TO VIET-NAM, HE AND WALDHEIM HAVE BEEN OPERATING ENTIRELY UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL'S PERSONAL AUTHORITY. STRESSING THAT NO FIRM PLANS HAD BEEN MADE TO DO SO, HE ASKED WHAT USG POSITION WOULD BE IF WALDHEIM SHOULD SEEK FORMAL ECOSOC MANDATE AT NEXT SUMMER'S SESSION. HE INTIMATED THAT SYG WOULD NOT BE INCLINED TO TAKE SUCH INITIATIVE IF US CLEARLY OPPOSED, BUT SAID THAT IF US SHOULD WISH, IN FIRST INSTANCE, TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO VIET-NAM IN MULTILATERAL RATHER THAN BILATERAL FRAMEWORK, A FORMAL ECOSOC MANDATE TO WALDHEIM FOLLOWED BY GLOBAL APPEAL MIGHT PROVIDE APPROPRIATE VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH US COULD CHANNEL CONTRIBUTIONS.

7. REQUEST DEPARTMENT GUIDANCE ASAP. CATTO

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